

The Monkey and The Dolphin

by Aesop

Hi there. My name is Bob Wilson from autoenglish.org and I'm going to tell you a bedtime story.

A ship was sailing from Egypt to Venice and on board there was a big monkey. One night, when the ship was passing the Greek Islands, there was a terrible storm.

The big monkey felt seasick and went on deck for some air. An enormous wave washed over the ship and dragged him into the sea and that should have been the end of the big monkey.

Now, sailors will tell you stories of how dolphins sometimes save drowning men and, as luck would have it, a little dolphin noticed the big monkey drowning in the sea, although the little dolphin thought he was a man, not a monkey, what with it being dark and there being a storm and all. With his nose, the little dolphin lifted the big monkey out of the water and the big monkey hung on to his fin, his big dorsal fin, that is.

The big monkey was too frightened and too tired to talk and so the little dolphin just swam away from the storm as fast as he could.

After a long time, the dark clouds departed and out came the stars and out came the Moon. The stars shone bright, I mean really bright and a shooting star flew across the sky. They could see lights from houses on the coast or the islands of Greece, I'm not sure which.

Remember, the little dolphin still thought the big monkey was a man and so said to him, in his squeaky, clicky voice, "Are you from Athens? I can take you to Athens."

The big monkey, who was a cheeky monkey even when half-drowned, said that he was indeed from Athens, from a very rich family, hoping to fool the dolphin. "They will give you a big reward for taking me there."

"Athens, it is then," clicked the little dolphin. And as they streamed across the surface of the sea, the next day began. The stars faded and the sky changed colour to beautiful blues. The smells of a new morning brought life back to the half-drowned big monkey.

"Do you know Piraeus?" clicked the little dolphin to the big monkey.

"Oh, of course I do," replied the big monkey, who was in fact a macaque. "We've been friends for years."

Piraeus is the port of Athens, not a man at all and the little dolphin realised the big monkey had been lying to him all along and he was really cheesed off about it. He tossed the macaque off his back and into the sea with a splash.

The macaque beat the water with his very long arms trying to stay afloat. "You're an ape!" exclaimed the little dolphin, even more cross now to see what a fool the monkey had made of him.

"Please don't let me drown," begged the big monkey. "I'm sorry I lied to you," he gasped, "but I was just too tired to tell you the truth."

The little dolphin was frowning when the big monkey's head went under the water. He felt very insulted. The big monkey managed just one more time to get his head above water and gasped, "Save me and I'll tell you lots of stories." He was spluttering water as he spoke. "I've sailed the seven seas. I've had fantastic adventures and I know lots."

As the little dolphin thought to himself, "I enjoy a good tale," the monkey slipped under the waves for the final time. "Gosh, where is he?" clicked the little dolphin and slid under the sea and raised the ape out of the water on his back.

“Very well, you cheeky monkey, I accept your offer. Sit sideways, you’ll be more comfortable like that... and have a rest before you tell me stories. You don’t look well.”

A warm Greek sun now shone strong and put life back into our hairy friend. After a rest of half an hour he could speak again, said thank you to the dolphin and began.

“A fisherman, who was used to catching lots of fish, one day pulled in his nets to find just one small fish.”

“Probably a sprat,” clicked the dolphin.

“The small fish begged the fisherman to throw him back in the water. – I’m worth nothing to you now. Let me go and I’ll grow into a big fish and then you can sell me for lots of money.-

“”Only if I catch you again,”” replied the fisherman and so he decided to keep the small fish.”

“The fisherman told his fishermen friends about his decision and they all agreed he’d done the right thing. Of course, within a few years all the fish were gone. The fishermen had to leave and go and work in the fields, which is back-breaking work and not well-paid. The fishermen were fools,” concluded the big monkey.

“I was in Fiji once, in the Pacific,” continued the macaque, “and there the people have a never ending supply of big fat delicious fish.”

“How?” clicked the little dolphin. It was a subject close to his heart.

“Well,” began the big monkey, “ every village has a part of the sea where no one can fish, ever, and in that place the fish grow fat and have so many babies it’s amazing. And when these babies grow up, they leave home and so the surrounding sea is always full of big fat fish.”

“Cool!” clicked the little dolphin. “Now tell me another story.”

“This is called,” began the big monkey, “man and mother nature.”

“Man declared that he was much cleverer than all the other animals on the planet because no other animal knew how to use tools. And dolphins he said were no cleverer than dogs.

-That’s a joke- laughed Mother Nature- and she showed man insects, birds and monkeys using tools. Then she showed him the dolphins that live in Shark Bay in Australia who use two tools: sponges to clear away the sand to find hiding fish and big shells as traps to catch them.

Then man said he was the only one who recognised himself in mirrors. Mother Nature showed him that monkeys and of course dolphins also recognised themselves in mirrors while a lot of other animals get scared and attack their own reflections.

Then Mother Nature showed man that dolphins have their own language and have their own names and they remember the names of their friends years and years after having seen them for the last time.

Then Mother Nature pointed out that dolphins don’t kill other dolphins and that they didn’t pollute and poison the places where they lived. Who then is more clever, dolphins or people?

Man was a bad loser and he turned his back on Mother Nature and they stopped being friends. Man continued doing and thinking silly things, like looking for petrol in the beautiful jungles of Ecuador, in South America and also in the gorillas’ home in the Congo in Africa. He was even poisoning all the water in England, looking for gas.”

The little dolphin suddenly had a great idea and suggested to the macaque that they go and live in Fiji, in the Pacific, where there are lots of fish and the people aren’t silly.

“Splendid,” said the big monkey. “It’s a very long way so I’ll need something to eat.”

So they called in to the Port of Piraeus where the monkey bought some grapes. The little green grapes of Greece are the most delicious grapes in the whole wide world, so the monkey was well pleased to get some.

On their long journey to Fiji they stopped off at many places and our hairy friend tried fabulous fruits from all over the planet. Pawpaws, baby bananas and mangosteens to name but three. They also had many fabulous adventures.

One fine afternoon the little dolphin and the macaque finally arrived in Fiji in the Pacific. Soon they made friends with the people. Indeed, some of them remembered the big monkey from his previous trip. The big monkey helped them get coconuts down from the palm trees and the little dolphin helped them find fish and scared off the sharks.

One fine day the little dolphin, who was no longer so little, met a beautiful lady dolphin. They were married and had lovely children and the big monkey was their favourite uncle, maybe because he was a cheeky monkey.

Night came and a gentle breeze blew through the palm trees who bowed and swayed and whispered long whispers to each other. The waves lapped softly against the sandy shore and little crabs ran between the pieces of dark brown wood washed up by the ocean. The little dolphin was there chatting to his old friend the big monkey. They laughed at all the adventures they’d had. They were very happy and very sleepy. The stars shone bright, I mean really bright and a shooting star flew across the sky. They could see the light from a bonfire in the village and hear the people singing songs, as usual.

“Tomorrow will be another lovely day,” said the macaque to his friend, “You know, I’m so glad we came here.”

“Me too, monkey. I really am.”

The macaque shimmied up a palm tree and made a cozy nest out of the branches and leaves. He lay back, hands behind his head gazing up at the stars. He heard a big splash and then, “Goodnight, Cheeky Monkey,” even though he wasn’t as cheeky as he used to be. The monkey was smiling.

“Goodnight, Little Dolphin,” he answered, even though the little dolphin was now a big daddy dolphin.

“I’ll come by bright and early,” said the little dolphin and he slipped under the smooth dark sea.

The big monkey was still smiling as his eyes grew heavy and closed. It really was a good night.